

Markham, Peter G

From: Roger Sheppard <roger.sheppard@wtap.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 11:31 PM
To: Markham, Peter G
Subject: Emergency reaction

Peter,

It was good to meet you and hear you address the on-going study that your team is conducting in the wake of this summers' devastating storm in West Virginia.

I would like to offer two suggestions:

1. **Generators:** My television station and some radio stations around WV had made the prior commitment to having generators and other back-up systems in place to serve their communities when their communities needed them most. Kudos to us and to those radio stations. But I know of many radio stations, quite a few here in the Parkersburg area, that had never bothered to spend the money necessary to be true public servants when the storms hit. Gray Television, owner of WTAP and WSAZ, has spent tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars on generators, Uninterruptible Power Supplies and other systems to help keep its stations on the air when the power is off. During the June 29 storm and in the week afterwards, WTAP spent nearly \$10,000 on diesel fuel to keep its generators running at its main facility (where people work to put out the news) and at our main transmitter (where our signal goes out). Having the power on at our main facility allowed us to continually update our website and send social media messages about what was going out IN ADDITION TO being on the air with information for those folks who DID have power. Shame on those newspapers and radio stations who had failed to make those investments. I understand that there is discussion of "inducements" or "incentives" to get gasoline stations and other facilities to install generators. WTAP did not need any incentives. But if incentives are offered, I'm assuming they would come in the form of some sort of tax breaks. If enough people take advantage of the incentive, won't that hurt tax proceeds? So, in order to offer incentives to get commercial businesses to do the right thing, we're going to take tax dollars away from something else? Doesn't seem right to me.
2. **FM Chip:** As I understand it, most "smart phones" these days come equipped with an "FM chip." This chip allows these phones to not only pick up calls and access the internet, but signals directly from the transmitters of FM radio stations! In those communities where the radio stations did what was necessary to stay on the air, people with smart phones with the FM chip activated could have listened to those radio stations from their phones! Very few people have battery-powered transistor radios anymore. Most people only have a radio in their cars. Yes, a person could go sit in his or her car and listen to the radio in the time of a storm, but that can be dangerous as I witnessed first hand the night of the storm, when covering the story of a man who went to his car and a tree fell on it, trapping him inside. If a person had a properly charged smart phone, with the FM chip activated, he or she could listen to a nearby LOCAL radio station, even if a cell tower was down and even if he or she didn't have electrical power at home. The snag? As I understand it, the smart phone makers and the mobile phone industry is fighting legislation that would FORCE them to activate these chips, which are already doing other jobs inside the phones. I'm not in favor of forcing industries to do things, but the federal government sure hasn't been shy about forcing TV broadcasters to give up spectrum and develop new digital technologies in the digital conversion in 2009, which cost the TV industry billions of dollars. That project alone cost my one TV station almost \$1 million and we did NOT get any incentives or bail-outs from the federal government to do it. I understand the cell phone industry doesn't want this, because people would find a way to use their phones that would not make the companies MONEY for each minute or app that is used. We should be fighting to get these FM chips activated in all phones as major way to save lives and to get out vital life-saving information when seconds count.

Sincerely,
Roger H. Sheppard
VP/GM

WTAP-WIYE-WOVA TV
NBC, FOX, CBS, MyNetwork
Parkersburg, WV
304-481-8110